If a boy came to school with uncombed hair and a stained T-shirt, you might make assumptions about his family life. That could affect what you notice and record about his behavior. The truth is, you don't know the reasons behind his appearance. It shouldn't affect your impressions.

While observing, Renee paid special attention to Sara because she resembled her young niece. As a result, Sara missed seeing what some of the other children were doing. Avoid focusing too much on children who are especially appealing or who seem more advanced in their skills.

Strive not to be influenced by what *you* think the child is like or what *you* think the child should be doing.

Don't assume you know what a child is thinking or feeling-that's a red flag that you are not being objective. "He feels sad" is subjective. How can you be sure the child is sad rather than afraid, angry, or frustrated? "He started crying" is objective.

Learning to observe-and especially to accurately interpret observations-takes time and practice .

Adjectives and adverbs help you add important details to your observations. Just be sure you are using them to describe facts. "She is being *silly* today" is your opinion. "Robbie walked over to Courtney *shyly"* makes an assumption about how Robbie's feeling. In contrast, "Robbie walked over to Courtney *slowly"* is descriptive but objective.

*i •*

"Laura is an incredible artist for her age" and "Jared seems to be the class clown" put labels on children. More objective observations would be "Jared sang a made-up song about worms three times" and "Laura's picture showed a house with windows, flowers, and a dog."

One observer wrote:·"Jason talked

baby talk at snacktime (He has a new baby sister

at home)." The way to record objectively would

be: at snack time Jason said 'Me want apple

juice. Me need bottle.'" Save your interpretations

for later.

Don't get upset by any emotional outbursts

and conflicts you witness. Stay focused and record what you see and hear.

*"A s you observe, your notes must be objective*

*rather than subjective. In other words, record facts*

*instead of making judgments and expressing your*

*opinions. After you observe, you will have an opportunity to interpret what you have seen.*

*An example of an objective observation is: "Josh told Steven he wanted a turn riding the tricycle.*

*Steven kept riding, and then Josh said it louder*

*and ran after him." A subjective observation of*

*the same event might be: "Josh was being selfish*

*and acting like a bully with Steven today."*

*Maintaining objectivity takes practice. Keep*

*the following in mind:*

• Don't label children.

* Use descriptive words with care.
* See children as they are.
* Guard against making assumptions.
* Realize your own limitations.
* Remain neutral.
* Examine your own biases.
* Don't let background information impair your objectivity.
* Avoid favoritism.